

Celia Paul *The Sea and The Mirror*

Private View 5.30 – 7.30pm, Saturday 23 September 2017

Exhibition 23 September – 16 December 2017

Victoria Miro Venice, Il Capricorno, San Marco 1994, 30124 Venice, Italy



Image: *Sea at Noon*, 2017
Oil on canvas
18.2 x 35.4cm, 7 1/8 x 14 in

Victoria Miro is delighted to present an exhibition of new works by the British artist Celia Paul. Made especially for the Venice gallery, the portraits and waterscapes on display offer touchstones for thoughts about time, transience, spirituality and mortality.

Paul's art stems from a deep connection with subject matter and is quiet, contemplative and ultimately moving in its profound attention to detail and deeply-felt spirituality. She is renowned for her intimate depictions of people and places she knows well. From 1977 to 2007 Paul worked on a series of paintings of her mother, and since then she has concentrated on painting her four sisters, especially her sister Kate, as well as a number of close friends. In *Kate Receiving the Light*, 2017, Paul's concerns as a painter – the act of prolonged scrutiny, the ever shifting effect of light – and the spiritual aspect of her work are drawn together and further enhanced by the work's triptych form and the religious connotation of its title.

Paul has also produced a large number of evocative self-portraits over the course of her career. Paul's self-portraits open up a painterly and conceptual dialogue between the dual role of subject and artist – caught between self-possession and self-scrutiny – as well as offering an extended consideration of the essential dualities of the medium – its ability to capture qualities of form, light and atmosphere, and its material presence.

While markedly different in character to her portraits and self-portraits, her paintings of water similarly focus on a subject she knows well. During the 1970s, Paul's father was head of the Lee Abbey religious community in north Devon. Paul returned to this stretch of coastline to make studies for the paintings in this exhibition. The works highlight the painter's challenge not only to capture specific states of matter – water and air – but to attempt to capture the moment. A shared characteristic with the self-portraits is that each wave has its own distinct character of form, tone and texture, becoming a kind of horizontal portrait.

Taking the idea of portraiture in a more elemental direction, Paul's water paintings are permeated by a sense of mortality, of bodies becoming dissolute and consciousness shifting into water, energy and light. Against a backdrop of Venice, a city where liquid and solid, water and earth, are held in fragile balance, they are especially resonant. She has spoken of her waterscapes in terms of feeling in flux following her mother's death. They certainly speak to the disorienting experience of grief. And yet, for Paul, solace can be found in the consoling beauty of nature and the flow of time that connects us all.

About the artist

Celia Paul was born in 1959 in Trivandrum, India. She lives and works in London. She has held recent major solo exhibitions including *Desdemona for Celia* by Hilton at Gallery Met, New York (2015-16); *Gwen John and Celia Paul: Painters in Parallel*, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester (2012-13); The Grave's Art Gallery, Sheffield (2005) and Abbot Hall, Kendal (2004). She has also participated in group exhibitions including *La Diablesse*, Tramps, London (2016); *NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2015-2016); *Forces in Nature* curated by Hilton Als at Victoria Miro (2015); *Recent acquisitions: Arcimboldo to Kitaj*, British Museum, London (2013); *Self-Consciousness*, curated by Peter Doig and Hilton Als, VeneKlasen/Werner gallery, Berlin (2010); *The School of London: Bacon to Bevan*, Musée Maillol, Paris (1998) and *British Figurative Painting of the 20th Century*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem (1992). Her work is in collections including Abbot Hall, Kendal; British Museum, London; Carlsberg Foundation, Copenhagen; Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; Frissiras Museum, Athens; Herzog Ulrich Gallery, Brunswick, Germany; Metropolitan Museum, New York; Morgan Library and Museum, New York; National Portrait Gallery, London; New Hall Art Collection, Murray Edwards College, Cambridge; Ruth Borchard Collection; Saatchi Collection, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Rubell Family Collection, Miami; and the Yale Center for British Art, Connecticut. Paul will be featured in Tate Britain's forthcoming major exhibition *All Too Human: Bacon, Freud and a Century of Painting Life* (28 February-27 August 2018). In spring 2018, she will be the subject of a solo exhibition, curated by Hilton Als, at Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.

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